



Linking Rural Community to Global Markets

Challenge

As in most of Mozambique, salaried job opportunities are few and unemployment is high in the central province of Manica, where more than 80% of the population cannot find work. Many people lack formal education - 64% never finished third grade and survive hand-to-mouth as subsistence farmers. Manica Province has attracted few business investors since Mozambique's 16-year civil war ended in 1992, although the area offers optimal agricultural conditions.



Photo: USAID/ Mozambique Suzanne Poland

Two workers carry roses outside Vilmar's greenhouses in rural Mozambique

"We congratulate Vilmar for contributing to the development of Mozambique. This is very important for providing jobs, particularly jobs for women."

- Joaquim Chissano, President of Mozambique

Results

In 2003, Vilmar exported more than four million roses to Europe, earning \$400,000 in gross sales. Today, Vilmar is one of the largest private-sector employers in the region, with 250 employees who plant, prune, harvest, sort and box roses from 420,000 bushes growing on seventeen acres. The new jobs have spurred economic activity in the community as other businesses spring up in response to rising incomes. Local horticulture students are participating in an internship program started by Vilmar, which will help assure a healthy future for flower production in Mozambique. Over the next five years, Vilmar plans to expand its rose-growing operation to eight-eight acres, which would boost production to sixty-three million roses a year and provide 900 more badly needed jobs for area residents.

Initiative

USAID created a public-private partnership to enable industry leaders from world-class companies to mentor business owners in Mozambique and increase income. USAID helped Mozambique's first cut flower producer, Vilmar, expand its operations after breaking ground in the town of Messica in Manica Province. Manica's climate is perfect for growing flowers year round, giving it a huge competitive advantage over other locations. African-grown roses are in high demand in Europe, creating an opportunity to link Mozambique to global commerce and bring badly needed jobs to poor residents.

After a successful initial shipment of 10,000 roses in late 2002, Vilmar wanted to grow and export roses to European markets. The company hired local residents to clear land and build ten greenhouses, a packaging house, and a cold storage facility. Top executives from the advertising firm Young & Rubicam helped Vilmar develop a brand identity and marketing strategy to boost its global competitiveness.

